

# ***Draft Bushfire Mitigation Landscape Strategy for Consultation***

**2024-2028**

*A plan for how we manage vegetation on public and private land to reduce the risk of bushfires*



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## Glossary of Terms

- **AFDRS:** Australian Fire Danger Rating System. This rating system, introduced in 2022, is consistent across Australia and replaces individual state and territory rating systems.
- **APZ:** Asset Protection Zones. Areas cleared around high risk assets including schools and aged care facilities, with the aim of reducing the impact of potential fires to these assets.
- **BARRA:** Bureau's Atmospheric high-resolution Regional Reanalysis for Australia
- **BMA:** Bushfire Management Area. SA is divided into nine BMAs read more about these via the State Bushfire Coordination Committee website:
- **BMAP:** Bushfire Management Area Plan. Each Bushfire Management Area has its own plan, overseen by the Bushfire Management Committee (BMC).
- **BMC:** Bushfire Management Committee. A body of representatives from state and local government, fire management authorities and emergency services who make decisions about bushfire management in their region. BMCs report to the SBCC.
- **DEW:** Department for Environment and Water. DEW is responsible for the management of conservation parks across SA.
- **DIT:** Department for Infrastructure and Transport. DIT is responsible for the management of roads and other major infrastructure within SA.
- **RRAMP:** Roadside Reserve Annual Maintenance Plan. Council's schedule for treatment works on public land.
- **SA CFS:** South Australian Country Fire Service. This consists of paid staff and volunteers. As a professional organization, CFS are the state hazard leaders in bushfire management.
- **SBCC:** State Bushfire Coordination Committee. A state-level committee appointed by the Governor under the Fire and Emergency Services Act 2005.

## 2 Executive summary

**Fire is a part of our landscape and can't be avoided, but together neighbours, community groups, council, businesses, and schools can have a positive impact on our landscape and reduce the risk of bushfires.**

This Strategy defines how Council, residents and other agencies can work together to manage these spaces to help mitigate bushfires.

The land that this Strategy manages includes:

- public reserves and parks (Council and State Government land)
- private property

We have worked with community members and key agencies to develop consistent information about what 'shared responsibility' looks like in practice and we're now asking you if anything is missing, unclear or you want further information.

We would like to thank the community groups including Landcare, CFS volunteers, SA Government agencies, primary producers and fire-affected communities who have contributed to developing this Strategy.

**Consultation note:** Please take a look through this draft Strategy and provide your comments via our online engagement hub ([engage.ahc.sa.gov.au](https://engage.ahc.sa.gov.au)) or by emailing our team with comments via [engage@ahc.sa.gov.au](mailto:engage@ahc.sa.gov.au) or calling our team on 8408 0400.



## 3 Background and Purpose

### 3.1 Message from the CEO

The Adelaide Hills is loved for its natural environment. We choose to live here for many reasons including native vegetation, biodiversity and beautiful seasons. The risk of bushfire is always present for Adelaide Hills residents, but now more than ever, with climate change driving longer and more intense fire seasons in Australia, we want to work with our community towards more effective management of our beautiful landscape.

This strategy is for our community. We've developed it to help you to better understand your responsibilities and ours. It focuses on better managing the risk of bushfires in regards to vegetation and landscapes. The aim is to reduce the negative impacts of fires when they do occur.

Protecting biodiversity and our native vegetation is also important, it's what makes our hills unique. This Strategy outlines how we are working across government and various partner agencies to manage landscapes relating to bushfire mitigation.

We have other programs and policies in place to support preparedness activities and community resilience and I encourage each of you to take responsibility to be prepared for the bushfire season. Take a look at our website for a wealth of resources created for our Hills community.

See: [www.ahc.sa.gov.au/recovery-readiness-resilience](http://www.ahc.sa.gov.au/recovery-readiness-resilience)

Council is continually improving and building on our existing fire mitigation programs and we are proud of the work our teams are doing in this space.

**Greg Georgopoulos**

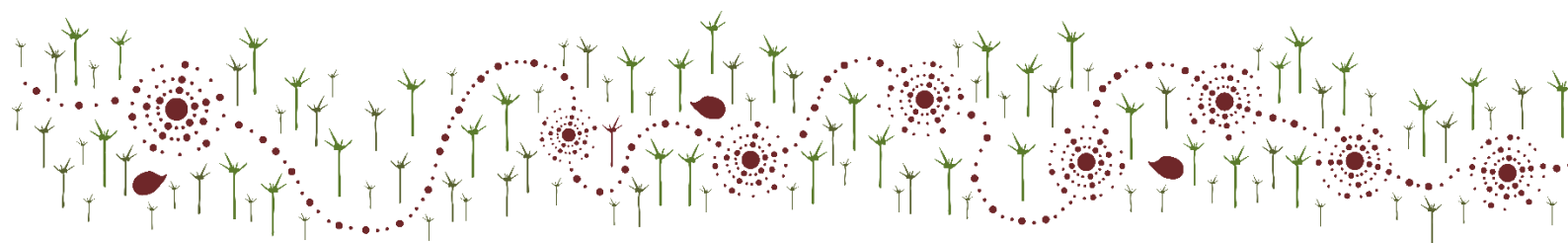
CEO Adelaide Hills Council

### 3.2 Acknowledgement of Country

Council acknowledges that we undertake our business on the traditional lands and waters of the Peramangk and Kurna people.

We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging as the Custodians of this ancient and beautiful land.

Together we will care for this Country for generations to come.



### 3.3 Context

The Adelaide Hills Council (AHC) region spans an area of 795 km<sup>2</sup>, with a total population of around 40,000 residents. One of the key characteristics of our area is its abundance and diversity of vegetation. This includes areas of primary production such as pastures, farmland, orchards and vineyards; as well as areas of native vegetation which have a high biodiversity value. High levels of vegetation can, however, contribute to the impact of bushfires when they do occur.

Historically, the Adelaide Hills have been impacted by a number of major bushfire events and declared bushfire emergencies. Our relatively high population, particularly in peri-urban areas and the hills face zone, creates a challenge in effectively managing future risk.

The Keelty Review, developed in response to the significant bushfire season of 2019-20, found that during that season ***extreme weather conditions meant that no level of hazard reduction could have prevented the fires.***<sup>1</sup> This is a vitally important message to anyone living in a high bushfire risk area: fuel hazard reduction programs are not always enough to prevent the impacts of fire.

The most effective way we can minimize negative impacts is by combining effective fuel load management with education and community preparedness, as well as developing new approaches to bushfire risk mitigation in line with the latest research and best practice management.

This strategy sets out how Adelaide Hills Council will meet these objectives on an ongoing basis, and how our community can support these efforts. While Council has a number of other initiatives and programs in place to support preparedness, the scope of this strategy is specifically around vegetation management, which is a complex area in its own right.

It aims to ensure we are doing our part to meet Recommendation 5 of the Keelty Review: ***Clarify and streamline processes and educate the community about their roles and responsibilities in managing native vegetation to improve hazard reduction.***

We have engaged extensively with numerous community members, groups, and organizations to ensure this strategy is realistic and achievable. A list of stakeholders who have had input into this strategy is provided in the Appendices. In particular, we would like to acknowledge the efforts of our online consultation group of residents and key agency staff, who helped us refine the priorities and recommendations and have been heavily involved in developing the shared responsibility tables under Strategic Priority 2.

### 3.4 Aims

The three major aims of this strategy are:

1. To have an informed, empowered and proactive community that effectively contributes to vegetation management.
2. To bring together Council's operational plans and processes related to vegetation management and bushfire mitigation in one place, and to clarify our responsibilities.
3. To ensure Council's approach is effective and expectations of both Council and community are realistic.

### 3.5 Strategic priorities

This strategy sets out an overall direction on how bushfire risk will be managed across AHC over the next four years, including the responsibilities of Council, residents and other relevant agencies.

Both the strategy and the operational plans should be reviewed annually following the bushfire danger season, with formal review and updates taking place every four years in line with the AHC Strategic Plan.

There are four strategic priorities underpinning the Bushfire Mitigation Landscape Strategy. Each of these is explored in more detail in the relevant section.

1. **Strengthening partnerships with other agencies** to foster a landscape scale approach to bushfire mitigation
2. **Improving education and providing clear direction** and resources to the community around vegetation management for bushfire risk
3. **Utilising latest fire science approaches** to assist in balancing bushfire mitigation with biodiversity
4. **Continuous improvement of Council's operational plans** in line with best practice approaches and using a rigorous ongoing review process

It should be acknowledged that the strategy is designed to be **financially and operationally sustainable**. Council will work with the resources we currently have in the most effective and efficient way. However, opportunities have been identified to utilise future funding for the strategic priorities above.

The guiding documents and references that have informed this strategy are listed in the "References" section.

We have also identified future opportunities and constraints under each priority.

### 3.6 Overview of Operational Plans

AHC has a number of operational plans and programs in place which contribute to our fire mitigation efforts. This strategy brings them all together.

These plans will be included as operational appendices in the final strategy.

A brief overview is also provided here.

- 1. Roadside Reserve Annual Maintenance Program (RRAMP)**

The aim of the RRAMP is to maintain sight lines for road safety, and reduce vegetation adjacent road corridors to mitigate the impacts of fire. Roads that are included on the RRAMP treatment schedule have been prioritized on the basis of traffic volumes, access and egress, and the connectivity of road systems that provide strategic fuel control breaks in the landscape.

- 2. Asset Protection Zones program (APZs)**

An APZ is a specified area surrounding a built asset or structure where vegetation fuel loads are reduced to inhibit the travel of fire and reduce the effects of heat, flame and ember attack. Council has established APZs on its works program which it manages on an annual basis.

- 3. Fire Track Maintenance Program**

Council manages and maintains a strategic network of fire tracks on both public and private land to support the CFS and state government fire management agencies to implement fire suppression operations.

- 4. Burning on Private Lands Program (BoPL)**

AHC supports the Department for Environment and Water with its BoPL program. Strategic sites identified through the Bushfire Management Area Plan are targeted for this program.

- 5. Private property inspections**

Prior to fire danger season each year, Council Rangers carry out inspections of private properties across the district and assess fire risk. Properties identified as not being adequately prepared are issued an expiation notice under the SA Fire and Emergency Services Act 2005 (Section 105F), and are required to take action within 21 days to ensure their property is prepared.

Additional operational appendices to be created:

- Spraying Program
- Bushfire Mitigation task list/schedule
- Map of all roadside Blue Marker Sites in AHC and overview of BMS scheme (under development)
- Fire Track Maintenance Program (under development)

### 3.7 Incorporating Traditional knowledge

Adelaide Hills Council spans across both Kaurna and Peramangk Country. We recognise the need to work collaboratively and meaningfully with our First Nations communities, who have deep knowledge and connection to the land and understanding of how fire can be used as a land management tool.

This is an ongoing commitment and if Council wishes to explore further, it would require dedicated staff time to facilitate in order to build relationships and dialogue between Council and traditional owners. AHC does not currently have a program of this nature in place; however the importance of such work is outlined in this strategy to inform future funding opportunities. We can draw on lessons from co-management plans that have been successful elsewhere, including the [Blue Mountains<sup>2</sup>](#) in NSW, as well as several [Parks Victoria<sup>3</sup>](#) agreements.

The Kaurna seasonal calendar below is accompanied by a list of ways in which the land is managed and can be looked after in each season [Kaurna calendar - Indigenous Weather Knowledge - Bureau of Meteorology \(bom.gov.au\) http://www.bom.gov.au/iwk/calendars/kaurna.shtml](#)



These resources from the AFDRS website are also useful for framing the role of fire in the landscape from a First Nations perspective, from: [https://afdrs.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/AFDRS\\_Caring-for-Mob\\_Poster\\_A1\\_2023\\_3\\_6\\_v1.0\\_WEB.pdf](https://afdrs.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/AFDRS_Caring-for-Mob_Poster_A1_2023_3_6_v1.0_WEB.pdf)

### 3.8 Challenges

Many parts of Australia are prone to fire. The way fire interacts with our landscape can be both beneficial and detrimental; and Council does have a role to play in supporting our community to adapt and prepare for the negative impacts.

The challenges in effectively managing fire risk across the Adelaide Hills Council area have been carefully considered in developing this strategy, and actions identified to manage these effectively. Key challenges are summarized below.

#### 3.8.1 Community

We have a unique demographic in the Adelaide Hills, with both an ageing population and ‘tree changers’ who have moved to the area seeking a new lifestyle. We also have a strong tourism sector, with regular visitation from people outside our region who may not necessarily be aware of the risk of bushfire. Additionally, there are many residents who commute to the city for work each day and are not always present to enact bushfire plans or prepare their properties on high-risk days.

This creates a need to deliver consistent and clear messaging around residential vegetation management, which responds to the needs of a wide cross-section of the community. We also recognise those who are living with disability or personal challenges which may impact their capacity to contribute to property preparation. While Council does currently coordinate some programs for eligible residents through the Hills Home and Community Support team, this strategy recognises that further educational materials could also be developed to provide additional assistance.

An additional challenge is that of absentee landholders- that is, where landowners do not reside at the property they own, and do not lease it to others. These properties are therefore effectively vacant and although the responsibility for fire mitigation lies with the owners, on occasion this



obligation is not met and residents may be issued with a 105F infringement notice under the Fire and Emergency Services Act (FES Act) 2005. If the resident fails to undertake the necessary work within the prescribed time period, this work is organised by Council and completed by contractors at the resident's expense.

Council has updated its enforcement policy so that any property owner who has received a 105F notice in the five years leading up to annual inspections will be issued an expiation at first inspection. This is to encourage owners to act more quickly to rectify property preparation issues. Increased education around property preparation is also a current focus for Council.

### 3.8.2 Environment

A key challenge for AHC is ensuring bushfire risk mitigation is balanced appropriately with biodiversity conservation. There is often some tension between managing risk to life and property and protecting native vegetation in line with the Native Vegetation Act 1991 and with our goals and objectives as a Council.

For example, many native species (such as *Acacia pycnantha* or golden wattle) are colonizers which can quickly take over and create heavier fuel loads following a significant fire. However, when these occur in protected areas, for example on road verges under the Native Vegetation Marker Scheme, removing them is not always an option according to the Native Vegetation Act 1991. We therefore need to work with landholders to identify effective alternatives that can reduce their risk.

Furthermore, we know that only 10% of the original native vegetation of the Adelaide Hills remains today<sup>4</sup>; which means we need to prioritize areas of remnant vegetation for conservation wherever possible. We will do this by ensuring our annual maintenance plans do not encroach on areas identified for conservation according to Council's Biodiversity Strategy.

The impacts of climate change on our fire season, and on the intensity of significant fires when they do occur, must also be acknowledged. As outlined in a recent report by Griffith University and the Australian National University, ***'The world is already experiencing 1°C of global warming above pre-industrial levels. Projected climate change will further increase dangerous fire weather danger over most of Australia and particularly in south-eastern Australia, with longer and more severe fire seasons, more days of high, very high and extreme fire danger, more area burned, and increased fire control difficulty.'***<sup>5</sup>

Under Strategic Priority 3, a set of recommendations is outlined to help address this challenge now and in future.

### 3.8.3 Infrastructure and assets

There are a significant number of nursing homes and schools within our Council area, which are deemed vulnerable or high-risk assets. Where possible, Council maintains Asset Protection Zones (APZs) of cleared vegetation around these facilities; however we cannot clear around every site due to topography as well as funding and resource constraints. We rely on the most up-to-date mapping and simulation technologies available to us to determine where APZs are of highest value.

As part of this schedule, we have also incorporated key communication infrastructure, such as mobile phone towers adjacent to Council-maintained fire tracks. It should be noted that telecommunications towers are not generally the responsibility of Council and are usually owned by telecommunications companies and maintained by those companies and by SA Power Networks.

It is important to note that while this strategy is specifically focused on vegetation and landscape management, other measures are in place to protect assets and infrastructure within our Council area. These include planning regulations for new buildings, including Bushfire Attack Level (BAL) ratings; as well as embedding community resilience into our Emergency Management operations and frameworks. More detail can be found by consulting the relevant sections of our website.

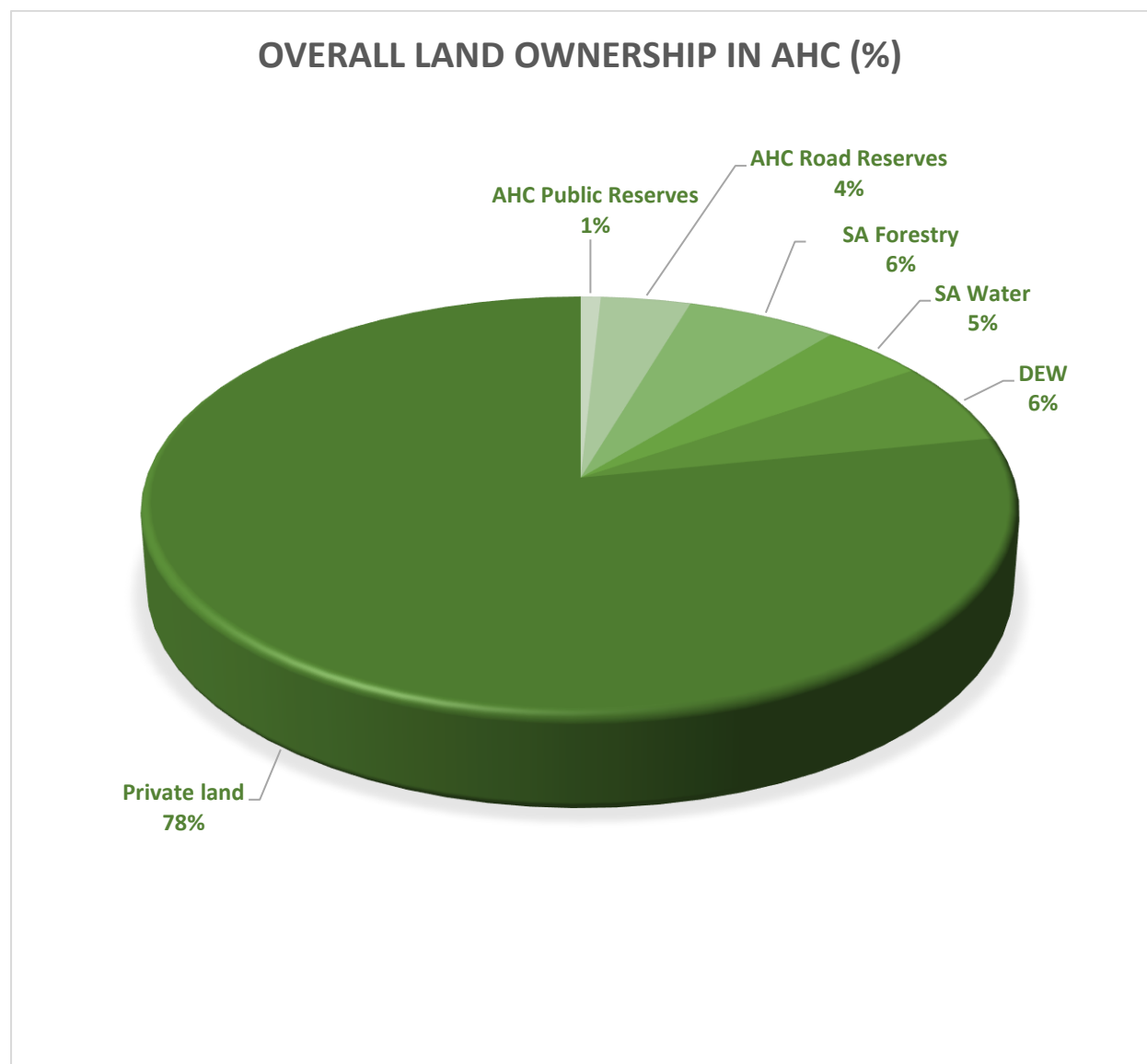


### 3.8.4 Education

Managing bushfire risk is not solely the responsibility of Council but is shared with other agencies and with the wider community. In the past, there has been a lack of clear information and direction around what 'shared responsibility' looks like in practice. AHC acknowledges our ongoing role in increasing public awareness of these issues, as well as providing transparency in our own processes and operations. Under Strategic Priority 2, a breakdown of responsibilities is provided along with direction on where our community can find further information and assistance.

The following graph provides a breakdown of land ownership across the AHC, which shows that less than 10% of all land in the AHC area is owned by Council. This reflects the need for us to work collaboratively with state government and private landholders to manage our landscape effectively.

Figure 1: Chart of land ownership in the Adelaide Hills Council area



### 3.9 Links to our Strategic Plan

The AHC Strategic Plan is reviewed every four years, coinciding with the review dates of the Bushfire Mitigation Strategy. You can read the strategic plan on our website here:

<https://www.ahc.sa.gov.au/council/council-documents/council-strategies-and-plans>

For the period 2024-2028, the following strategic goals will inform Council's bushfire mitigation operations:

#### GOAL C: COMMUNITY WELLBEING

|                                                          |                                                                                                                                                               |
|----------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| C2. A connected, engaged and supported community         | C2.4 Increase participation from the broadest range of our community and engage with them to shape policies, places and decisions that affect them            |
| C3. A community that grows together                      | C3.3 Empower our community groups and leaders...supporting communities to be cohesive in progressing local projects                                           |
| C4. An active, healthy, thriving and resilient community | C4.5 Take an all hazards approach to emergency management so we can support the emergency services and the community before, during and after disaster events |

#### GOAL N: A VALUED NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

|                                                                                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| N1. Conserve and enhance the regional natural landscape character and amenity values of our region                               | N1.2 Manage reserves and open space to support the community, whilst balancing biodiversity conservation, resource use and environmental impacts                                                                                                                      |
| N2. Recognise the benefits of ecosystem services and improve environmental resilience by reducing environmental impacts          | N2.3 Mitigate bushfire risks across the landscape by undertaking fuel reduction activities including woody weed control, maintenance of asset protection zones and educate & enforcement to reduce fuels on private property                                          |
| N3. Nurture valuable partnerships and collaborations and engage the local community in the management of our natural environment | N3.1 Increase knowledge and environmental awareness within the community through engagement and education<br>N3.3 Continue to work in partnership with the Resilient Hills & Coasts region to build Council and community resilience to the impacts of climate change |

#### GOAL O: A PROGRESSIVE ORGANISATION

|                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                           |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| O3. Our organization is financially sustainable for both current and future generations           | O3.4 Assess the range and level of services undertaken to ensure they fulfil Council's legislative and strategic intent   |
| O5. We are accountable, informed, and make decisions in the best interests of the whole community | O5.2 Make evidence-based decisions and prudently assess the risks and opportunities to our community before taking action |

## 4 Strategic Priority 1: Strengthening Partnerships with Other Agencies

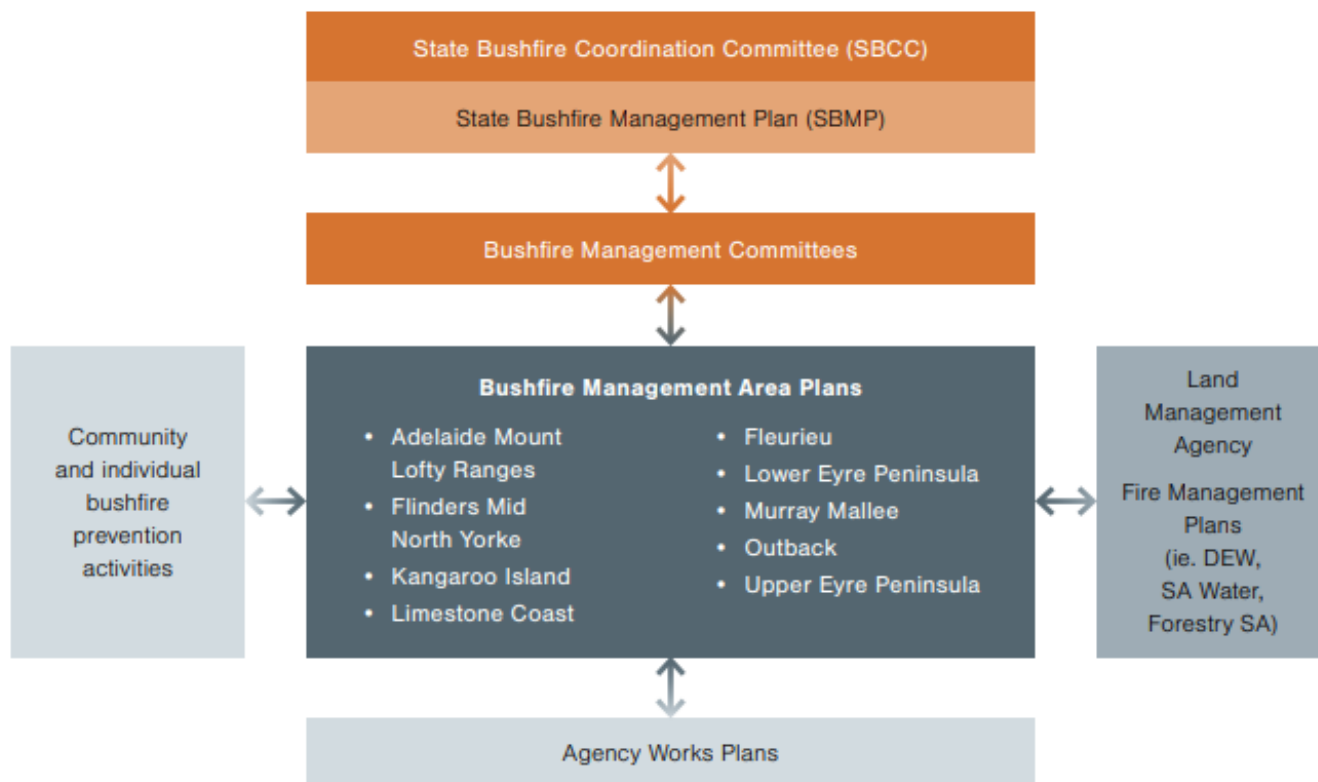
There are numerous other organizations involved in bushfire mitigation and landscape management across AHC and South Australia more widely. It is therefore important that our Council's operations are informed by existing policies and practices, and that we are meeting our obligations under these.

This strategy has been developed in line with several key pieces of legislation, which are summarized below.

| Legislation                                                                | Section                                        | Details                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| SA Fire and Emergency Services Act 2005                                    | 71A                                            | The State Bushfire Prevention Committee has a responsibility to prepare and review Bushfire Management Area Plans and to oversee their implementation. They are also to provide guidance to individual bushfire management committees.                                                                                                           |
|                                                                            | 105(F)                                         | Owners of private land must take reasonable steps to prevent or inhibit the outbreak or spread of fire through the land.<br><br>Authorized Council staff may request in writing that private landholders rectify issues on their properties relating to bushfire preparedness and prevention. Maximum penalty for failing to comply is \$10,000. |
| SA Native Vegetation Act 1991                                              | 33B (1)a                                       | An authorised officer, appointed by local council, may enter and inspect any land for any reasonable purpose connected with the enforcement of this Act.                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|                                                                            | Schedule 1: Principles of Native Veg Clearance | Native vegetation should not be cleared if, in the opinion of the Council, it comprises a high level of biodiversity, or it has significance as a habitat for wildlife or includes rare plants or plant communities.                                                                                                                             |
| Commonwealth Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 | Part 3, Div. 1 (C 18)                          | A person must not take action that will have a significant impact on any threatened species or ecological community.                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Landscapes SA Act 2019                                                     | 192 (8)                                        | All regional landscape boards must carry out proper measures for the destruction or control of declared animals on public and private lands, including road reserves.                                                                                                                                                                            |
| SA Local Government Act 1991                                               | 221                                            | A person (other than the council or a person acting under some other statutory authority) must not make an alteration to a public road unless authorised to do so by the council. Maximum penalty: \$5 000. This includes removal of vegetation.                                                                                                 |

Figure 2: AHC’s bushfire mitigation strategy and key committees and plans shows the relationship between AHC’s bushfire mitigation strategy and key committees and plans related to bushfire mitigation in SA.

Figure 2: AHC’s bushfire mitigation strategy and key committees and plans



From [SASBMP.pdf \(safecom-files-v8.s3.amazonaws.com\)](#), p2

The agency works plans specific to AHC are discussed in more detail under Strategic Priority 2.

Risk analysis within the Bushfire Management Area Plan is determined using several inputs, including:

- Vulnerability of assets and people.
- Vegetation type and its distance from the asset.
- Predominant slope of the vegetation in relation to the asset.
- Access and/or egress to and from the asset.
- Frequency of ignitions in the general area of the asset.

#### 4.1 Links to relevant frameworks and plans

The following documents have been used extensively to guide development of our strategy and future priorities. They provide solid examples of best practice fire management and methodology and should be referred to in future reviews of this strategy.

- State Bushfire Coordination Committee (SBCC) 2016, Adelaide and Mt Lofty Ranges Bushfire Management Area Plan June 2016 <https://sbcc.sa.gov.au/bushfire-management-committees/adelaide-and-mount-lofty-ranges/bushfire-management-area-plan/>
- NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment, [Fire Management Manual 2022-23](https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/-/media/OEH/Corporate-Site/Documents/Parks-reserves-and-protected-areas/Fire/fire-management-manual-2022-23-220248.pdf) <https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/-/media/OEH/Corporate-Site/Documents/Parks-reserves-and-protected-areas/Fire/fire-management-manual-2022-23-220248.pdf>
- State Bushfire Coordination Committee (SBCC) 2020, [Bushfire Management Zone Standard and Guidance for Use](https://sbcc.sa.gov.au/public/download/?id=157264) <https://sbcc.sa.gov.au/public/download/?id=157264>
- State Government of Victoria (VicRoads) 2013, [Road Bushfire Risk Assessment Guidelines and Risk Mapping Methodology](https://www.vicroads.vic.gov.au/-/media/files/technical-documents-new/bushfire-risk-assessment-guidelines/road-bushfire-risk-assessment-guidelines-and-risk-mapping-methodology.ashx) <https://www.vicroads.vic.gov.au/-/media/files/technical-documents-new/bushfire-risk-assessment-guidelines/road-bushfire-risk-assessment-guidelines-and-risk-mapping-methodology.ashx>

There are AHC staff representatives on the AMLR Bushfire Management Committee. We also work closely with several neighboring Councils and have developed this strategy to align with their fire management plans as appropriate:

- City of Tea Tree Gully Bushfire Mitigation Framework 2022 - 2026 <https://www.teatreegully.sa.gov.au/files/assets/public/v/1/council-business-news-and-information/documents/bushfire-mitigation-framework-2022-2026-web.pdf>
- City of Onkaparinga Bushfire Management Plan 2020-2024 version 2.0 <https://www.onkaparingacity.com/files/assets/public/permits/city-of-onkaparinga-bushfire-management-plan-2020-v12.pdf>
- Kangaroo Island Fire Management Plan <https://www.environment.sa.gov.au/topics/fire-management/fire-science-and-planning/fire-management-plans/ki-fire-management-plan>

#### 4.2 Current actions

AHC is committed to working with other agencies including the SA Country Fire Service, Department of Environment and Water, Forestry SA, Hills & Fleurieu Landscape Board, and other state government agencies and community action groups to ensure a shared approach to vegetation and landscape management can be achieved.

**The responsibilities of Council and the community are set out under Strategic Priority 2.**

As part of our approach to landscape management, AHC has also initiated a cross-council bushfire action group focused on vegetation management and fire mitigation. The group comprises fire management staff from multiple Councils across the Adelaide Mt Lofty Ranges Bushfire Management Area, and its aim is to collaborate on landscape scale issues such as verge management and fire track maintenance, as well as developing educational resources with consistent messaging across all Council areas.

## 5 Strategic Priority 2: Improving Education and Providing Clear Direction

### 5.1 Local government obligations

According to the State Bushfire Management Plan 2021-25 (SBMP)<sup>6</sup>, local governments are required to undertake the actions outlined below. These actions demonstrate that Council's obligations are largely around prevention and preparedness, with communication being a key priority.

| Government agency acronym | Full spelling                                           |
|---------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|
| CFS                       | Country Fire Service                                    |
| SAPOL                     | SA Police                                               |
| MFS                       | Metropolitan Fire Service                               |
| NVC                       | Native Vegetation Council                               |
| DEW                       | Department for Environment and Water                    |
| DIT                       | Department for Infrastructure and Transport             |
| SAFECOME                  | South Australian Fire and Emergency Services Commission |

#### Prevention

- Provide additional public education on high risk activities during periods of high fire danger (with CFS and SAPOL)
- Issuing of permits to burn during fire danger season (with CFS)
- Annual inspection and compliance notifications (with CFS)
- Communication and information provision regarding native vegetation clearance processes (with CFS, MFS and NVC)
- Communication and information provision regarding the role of public land management in hazard reduction (with CFS, DEW, SA Water, Forestry SA)
- Hazard and fuel reduction burning (in partnership with all other agencies)

#### Preparedness

- Improve preparation and planning of suitable routes to designated locations to reduce risk (with SAPOL, SAFECOME, CFS and DIT)
- Suitable venues or locations identified across the state for Relief and Recovery Centres (with Housing SA, Zone Emergency Management Committees, SAPOL)

#### Response

- Assist in timely activation of relief centres and support for communities impacted by bushfire (with Housing SA and Zone Emergency Management Committees)

#### Recovery

- Management of recovery following a bushfire incident to improve and enhance conditions in an affected community (with other agencies)

Council has the following plans and policies in place, in addition to this Bushfire Mitigation Landscape Strategy, which assist in meeting our prescribed responsibilities as well as promoting our region's biodiversity and ecological value.

- Roadside Vegetation Management Plan 2015-2020  
<https://www.ahc.sa.gov.au/assets/downloads/Adelaide-Hills-Council-Roadside-Vegetation-Management-Plan-Final.pdf>
- Biodiversity Strategy 2019-2024

<https://www.ahc.sa.gov.au/assets/downloads/council/Strategy/Biodiversity-Strategy-2019-24.pdf>

We are also guided by the following plans from other agencies:

- Hills & Fleurieu Landscape Board Pest Management Strategy  
<https://www.landscape.sa.gov.au/hf/our-priorities/land/pest-plants-and-animals>
- Hills & Fleurieu Landscape Board Regional Roadside Weed Control Work Plan  
[Managing declared weeds on roadsides \(landscape.sa.gov.au\)](https://www.landscape.sa.gov.au/Managing-declared-weeds-on-roadsides)
- AMLR Zone Emergency Management Plan

## 5.2 Resident responsibilities

Following the 2019-20 Black Summer bushfires, a report was produced by Australia's Natural Hazards Cooperative Research Centre to identify key issues and learnings from the season. The final report clearly highlights 'the need for integrated and holistic responses to risk reduction- **a shared responsibility between governments, fire and emergency services, businesses and communities at risk**'.<sup>7</sup>

Under the Fire and Emergency Services Act Section 2005 S105(F): **'Owners of private land must take reasonable steps to prevent or inhibit the outbreak or spread of fire through the land.'**

Without a clear definition of 'reasonable steps,' there is potential for a lack of action; and this is especially likely when community members perceive that others around them are not doing enough. This is of particular concern in the Adelaide Hills, as we have high proportions of vegetation which is often connected regardless of property tenure. This means the actions of individual property owners can have a considerable impact on those living around them.

This is why it's important that we are collaborative in our management of the risks, and that those living in bushfire prone areas clearly understand those risks. Council acknowledges that for some time there has been a lack of consistent information about what 'shared responsibility' looks like in practise. We have therefore developed detailed information for our community to clarify expectations around this.

This information is also set out under Strategic Priority 2.

We have done this in consultation with a focus group comprised of residents and other key stakeholders; including the CFS, National Parks & Wildlife and DEW; as well as collaborating with neighbouring councils to ensure consistency in the information being offered.

It is important to note that while Council has its own responsibilities for managing fire risk across the Hills, residents are also expected to be proactive in managing their own land. There are steps we can all take to mitigate the overall risks to our landscape, and those are set out across the following pages.

### 5.3 Our resources and where to find them

Through consultation undertaken on this strategy to date, we have identified several recurring themes on which our community have indicated they would like further information. We are intending to prioritise the development of those which receive most interest during wider consultation. The final version of this strategy will then include links to where this information can be found.

Topics suggested to date include:

- Native Vegetation Marker Sites
- The S221 process explained (authorisation to alter or access a public road)
- FAQs on our Roadside Reserve Maintenance Program (including which roadsides are included)
- How to prepare your property for the fire season (may be one resource incorporating different property types, or several resources- one for each property type)
- How verges are managed (cross-council collaboration)

**Tell us what information you would like to see to help you prepare your property for bushfires.**

It is recommended that this list be reviewed every 4 years to ensure any new knowledge gaps are filled, and updated case study examples and best practise guidelines can be incorporated.



## 5.4 Summary of responsibilities

A 2023 report by Resilient Hills & Coasts states:

*Communicating bushfire prevention and preparedness must include a coherent and strong message about 'shared responsibility' (Resilient Hills & Coasts Bushfire and Biodiversity Report 2023 Part C: Discussion and Recommendations)*

<https://engage.ahc.sa.gov.au/88841/widgets/417182/documents/271149>

The AHC region encompasses multiple different land use types, as shown below. This means that we need to tailor the information available to our community to ensure all of these land uses are represented.

Figure 4: AHC land use types by percentage

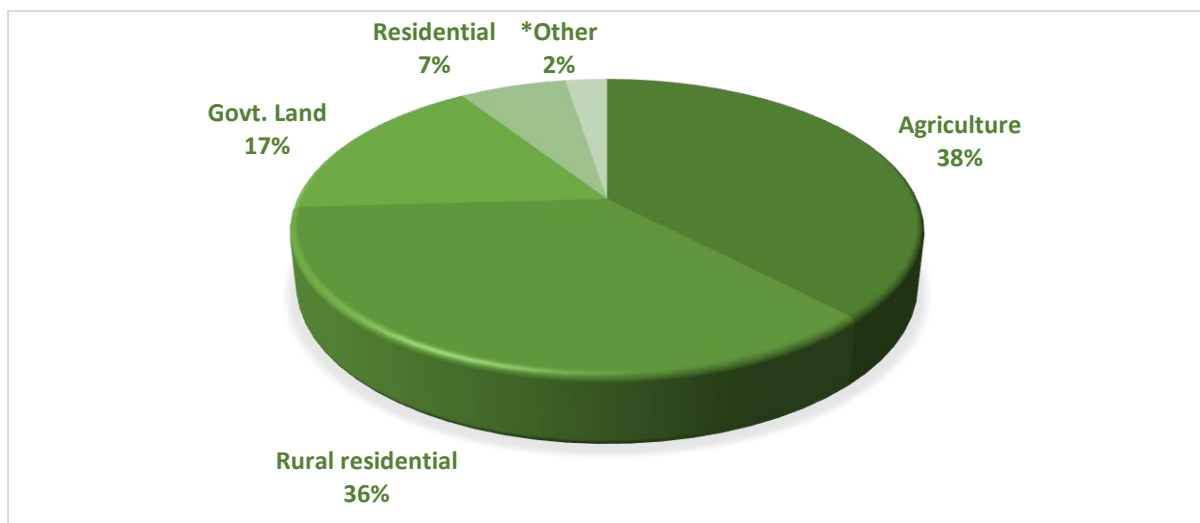
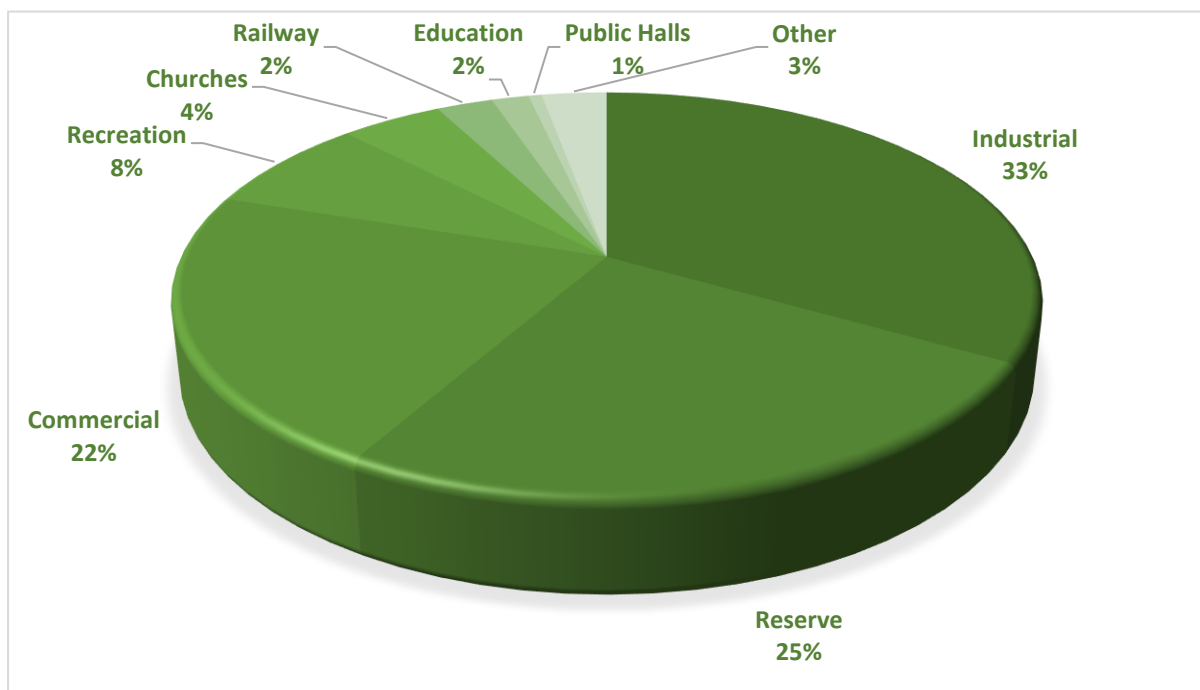


Figure 3: \*Other breakdown



The information on the following pages has been developed to clarify the breakdown of responsibilities for residents, Council and other agencies.

## 6 Shared responsibility for different land classifications

This section explains what everyone's responsibilities are for different land classifications. At the end of each section are helpful resources for further information.

| Responsibilities: Private Property Preparation |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Council responsibilities</b>                | <p>Under the Fire and Emergency Services Act 2005 (Section 105F), <i>Authorized officers, including certain Council staff, may request in writing that private landholders rectify issues on their properties relating to bushfire preparedness and prevention. Maximum penalty for failing to comply is \$10,000.</i></p> <p>Council has a role to play in clearly informing residents of their obligations according to relevant legislation. Our public-facing resources will be updated regularly to reflect this.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <b>Resident responsibilities</b>               | <p>Under the Fire and Emergency Services Act 2005 (Section 105F): <i>Owners of private land must take reasonable steps to prevent or inhibit the outbreak or spread of fire through the land.</i></p> <p>This involves clearing a defendable space around your dwelling, clearing fine fuels in the lead up to fire season, thinning particularly dense vegetation that is likely to carry fire quickly.</p> <p>The most important factor in protecting a home is to appropriately manage vegetation within 20m of the building. See Department for Environment and Water - Fire prevention<br/> <a href="https://www.environment.sa.gov.au/topics/native-vegetation/clearing/fire-prevention">https://www.environment.sa.gov.au/topics/native-vegetation/clearing/fire-prevention</a></p> <p>Residents may at times be requested to clear a fire break on their property, where fuel loads exceed safe thresholds. It's important to note that while fire breaks can slow or halt lower intensity fires, they don't offer protection against ember attack- so clearing a break as a standalone action is not enough to mitigate risk.</p> <p>You can find more information on our website at Bushfires and Fire Prevention<br/> <a href="https://www.ahc.sa.gov.au/services/waste-and-recycling/free-green-organics-drop-off-days">https://www.ahc.sa.gov.au/services/waste-and-recycling/free-green-organics-drop-off-days</a></p> |
| <b>Other agencies (if relevant)</b>            | <p>DEW delivers the Burning on Private Lands (BoPL) program, supporting public and private land managers to conduct prescribed burns on private properties identified as containing high fuel loads &amp; providing strategic connectivity of other fuel reduced buffer zones at a landscape level.</p> <p>SA CFS is the lead agency when it comes to community education regarding bushfire mitigation.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |

| Help: Private Property Preparation |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>What Council is doing</b>       | <p>Council is developing a series of case studies with photographic and visual elements to demonstrate good property preparation and share information on how this is achieved. This will cover a range of different property types.</p> <p>We work in partnership with the CFS wherever possible to deliver educational sessions and workshops- including “Bushfire Ready” (both online and in person), Firey Women, and targeted awareness campaigns.</p> <p>To assist with private property preparation, we offer up to 24 free green waste drop off days per annum. You can check dates on our website here Free Green Organics Drop Off Days<br/> <a href="https://www.ahc.sa.gov.au/services/waste-and-recycling/free-green-organics-drop-off-days">https://www.ahc.sa.gov.au/services/waste-and-recycling/free-green-organics-drop-off-days</a></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| <b>How Council can help</b>        | <p>Our Regulatory Services team can provide advice on regulatory obligations and site-specific requirements as needed. For more information contact AHC on 8408 0400.</p> <p>Council also administers burning permits to help residents with the reduction of fuel loads on private properties.</p> <p>Strategic planting around homes and assets can be a great way to maintain biodiversity and help address fire risk. We have a <a href="#">Low Flammability Planting Guide</a> that can be used to determine the best native species for your area.<br/> <a href="https://www.ahc.sa.gov.au/assets/downloads/environment/ENVIRONMENT-Low-Flammability-species_2020.pdf">https://www.ahc.sa.gov.au/assets/downloads/environment/ENVIRONMENT-Low-Flammability-species_2020.pdf</a></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>Further information</b>         | <p>For new homes and developments, the clearance of native vegetation may require approval from the Native Vegetation Council. Council approval may also be required for removal of trees with a circumference greater than 2m in some cases. If you are building or developing in the AHC, it is advisable to check with our Duty Planner before proceeding. Call AHC on 8408 0400 and ask to be put through.</p> <p>Property owners wanting more information about the BoPL program can contact DEW fire management staff following the links at <a href="http://www.environment.sa.gov.au/topics/fire-management/contact-us">www.environment.sa.gov.au/topics/fire-management/contact-us</a></p> <p>Bushfire Resilience Inc. based in Victoria has a great selection of webinars and other resources about preparing private property. You can browse and watch them here Resource Hub - Bushfire Resilience Inc: <a href="https://bushfireresilience.org.au/resource-hub/">https://bushfireresilience.org.au/resource-hub/</a></p> <p>The <a href="https://climatewisecommunities.com.au/">ClimateWise communities</a> website also has a range of very useful information about how residents can manage their vegetation effectively: <a href="https://climatewisecommunities.com.au/">https://climatewisecommunities.com.au/</a></p> |

| Responsibilities: Fire Track Maintenance |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Council responsibilities</b>          | <p>There are several different categories of fire tracks, with responsibility for their management falling to various organisations and land managers.</p> <p>While this is a complex space to manage, Council is committed to supporting the community in maintaining fire access tracks and will work closely with the CFS to ensure this is done.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| <b>Resident responsibilities</b>         | <p>Where fire tracks traverse private land, Council does rely on landowners to maintain clear passage where possible, and to report any issues to Council.</p> <p>Council can provide assistance to maintain fire tracks on private property where the track is identified as high priority and the landowner is unable to manage without support.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| <b>Other agencies (if relevant)</b>      | <p>CFS has its own Group Response Plans which contain information about fire tracks in each area. Any new tracks should complement those which already exist.</p> <p>ForestrySA maintains a network of fire tracks in forest reserves (plantation and native forest) under its jurisdiction.</p> <p>SA Water maintains a network of fire tracks in land under its jurisdiction (including reservoir reserves).</p> <p>DEW maintains a network of fire tracks in land under its jurisdiction (including Conservation Parks and National Parks).</p> <p>The removal of any native vegetation at a distance greater than 5m from fire tracks, is subject to approval through the Native Vegetation Council. This is regardless of who owns the land.</p> |

| Help: Fire Track Maintenance |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>What Council is doing</b> | We are currently working with the support of the CFS to design an audit process for all fire tracks in the AHC district, and to determine how best to manage them.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| <b>How Council can help</b>  | If you do have a fire access track on your property and are unable to maintain it yourself, you can contact Council to notify us of maintenance required. We will program maintenance if the condition of the track warrants it. Contact AHC's Technical Officer, Parks & Reserves through council's Customer Contact Centre 8408 0400.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| <b>Further information</b>   | <p>For clear detail on types of fire access tracks and how they are constructed, visit <a href="http://www.landscape.sa.gov.au/mr/publications/bushfire-prevention-constructing-fire-access-tracks">www.landscape.sa.gov.au/mr/publications/bushfire-prevention-constructing-fire-access-tracks</a></p> <p>You can also reflect to Section 5.4 of SAFECOM's fire track guidelines here <a href="https://safecom-files-v8.s3.amazonaws.com/current/docs/fire_breaks_and_fire_access_tracks_2005%20%281%29.pdf">https://safecom-files-v8.s3.amazonaws.com/current/docs/fire_breaks_and_fire_access_tracks_2005%20%281%29.pdf</a></p> |

| Responsibilities: Public Parks and Reserves |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|---------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Council responsibilities</b>             | <p>Under Section 105G of the Fire and Emergency Service Act 2005: <i>A council that manages land in a bushfire risk area must take appropriate steps to prevent and inhibit fires, and to minimize the risk to property and life.</i></p> <p>In order to achieve this, AHC maintains fire breaks, fire access tracks and Asset Protection Zones in strategic areas across our district.</p> <p>Our Biodiversity team also undertakes control measures for woody weed infestations that increase fuel loads in public areas.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>Resident responsibilities</b>            | <p>A number of active Landcare groups assist Council with the management of natural area reserves through revegetation and weed control, as well as site monitoring which allows for early management interventions when issues arise.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <b>Other agencies (if relevant)</b>         | <p>DEW has Fire Management Plans for 15 reserves across the Mt Lofty Ranges, 10 of which are located within the Adelaide Hills Council LGA. The responsibility for these reserves rests with state government.</p> <p>See the Fire Management Plans here: <a href="https://cdn.environment.sa.gov.au/environment/docs/fire-management-plan-hills-face-zone-plan.pdf">https://cdn.environment.sa.gov.au/environment/docs/fire-management-plan-hills-face-zone-plan.pdf</a></p> <p>Local government has no authority to direct other government agencies to conduct any works on State Government or Federal Land.</p> <p>ForestrySA has Forest Management Plans for 19 forest reserves, including five (5) Native Forest Reserves, within the Adelaide Hills Council LGA. The responsibility for these reserves rests with state government. To see existing ForestrySA forest management plans, visit <a href="https://www.forestrysa.com.au/forest-management/conservation/native-forest-reserves/">https://www.forestrysa.com.au/forest-management/conservation/native-forest-reserves/</a></p> |

| Help: Public Parks and Reserves |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>What Council is doing</b>    | <p>According to AHC's Biodiversity Strategy, approximately fifty Council reserves and Crown land parcels in the AHC are managed for conservation. This involves active revegetation as well as threat abatement measures including pest plant management and prescribed burning. <a href="https://www.ahc.sa.gov.au/assets/downloads/council/Strategy/Biodiversity-Strategy-2019-24.pdf">https://www.ahc.sa.gov.au/assets/downloads/council/Strategy/Biodiversity-Strategy-2019-24.pdf</a></p> <p>We are exploring opportunities for working with traditional owners to manage public land in accordance with First Nations cultural values and knowledge.</p> <p>We are also currently assessing opportunities to enhance management options for natural area reserves, through development of formal site management plans where possible.</p>                                                                          |
| <b>How Council can help</b>     | <p>AHC supports Landcare groups with equipment and material resources to conduct their on ground work.</p> <p>We can support initiatives to engage traditional owners from the Kaurna and Peramangk Nations to participate in natural area management and potentially incorporate cultural burning practises into prescribed burning programs.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <b>Further information</b>      | <p>For details on involvement in Landcare groups, contact <a href="mailto:AHCBiodiversity@ahc.sa.gov.au">AHCBiodiversity@ahc.sa.gov.au</a></p> <p>To see existing National Parks Wildlife Service park management plans, visit:<br/> Management plans - National Parks and Wildlife Service South Australia<br/> <a href="https://www.parks.sa.gov.au/park-management/management-plans">https://www.parks.sa.gov.au/park-management/management-plans</a></p> <p>Department for Environment and Water - Park management plans<br/> <a href="https://www.environment.sa.gov.au/topics/park-management/statewide-park-strategies/park-management-plans">https://www.environment.sa.gov.au/topics/park-management/statewide-park-strategies/park-management-plans</a></p> <p>For details on weed control programs across the region, contact <a href="mailto:Hf.LandscapeBoard@sa.gov.au">Hf.LandscapeBoard@sa.gov.au</a></p> |

| Responsibilities: Roadside Verge Management |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|---------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Council responsibilities</b>             | <p>Council has a Roadside Vegetation Management Plan (RVMP) which has been endorsed by the Native Vegetation Council, and guides our work on roadsides. The AHC commitment to roadside vegetation is <i>to maintain road traffic safety within legislative parameters while retaining remnant roadside vegetation of high biodiversity value</i>.</p> <p>According to the SA Fire and Emergency Services Act 2005 (Section 105G): <i>A council that manages land in a bushfire risk area must take appropriate steps to prevent and inhibit fires, and to minimize the risk to property and life</i>.</p> <p>Council is responsible for less than 5% of roadsides in the AHC area. We do schedule works on a priority basis on these roadsides as outlined below.</p> <p>Whilst other Councils do maintain all verges in their district, AHC is in a unique position where it is not feasible for us to do this due to our topography and high levels of vegetation. Instead, we prioritise maintenance based on set criteria, and where possible identify opportunities for neighbouring Councils to assist with works along shared boundaries.</p>                                               |
| <b>Resident responsibilities</b>            | <p>All native vegetation is protected under the SA Native Vegetation Act 1999, and may not be pruned or removed without formal approval. Fines of up to \$5000 can apply. Therefore, any activity on a road verge undertaken by a resident requires permission from Council under Section 221 of the Local Government Act. Application forms are found here: Authorisation to Alter a Public Road • Adelaide Hills Council (ahc.sa.gov.au)</p> <p>Where verges have been identified as containing high biodiversity value, and are included on the Native Vegetation Marker Scheme, works may only be carried out by council or their approved contractors. Residents can contact council's Customer Contact Centre to request works as appropriate.</p> <p>Any work on roadside verges that are considered to be for amenity value or for general maintenance is the responsibility of the adjacent resident.</p> <p>Council is aware that there are community groups that have voluntarily formed to share resources and ensure fuel loads are reduced on adjacent roadsides prior to fire danger season. We are looking at opportunities to further showcase and support these initiatives.</p> |
| <b>Other agencies (if relevant)</b>         | <p>Neighbouring Councils do exchange information on roads where boundaries are shared. We are continually looking at scheduled maintenance works on these sites and assessing how best to share resources and carry out works in a timely and effective manner. Under the Landscape South Australia Act 2019 (Section 194), Landscape Boards are responsible for managing declared weeds on all roadsides regardless of who owns them. This includes those covered under the Native Vegetation Marker Scheme.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |

|  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|--|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  | DIT is responsible for maintaining their own roadside verges, but only to within 1.5m of the sealed road edge. The remainder of the verge is technically the responsibility of council, but we only carry out mitigation works on those deemed highest priority according to data from the Bushfire Management Area Plan. |
|--|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

| Help: Roadside Verge Management |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>What Council is doing</b>    | <p>Council operates three programs to maintain road verges: Annual Roads and Reserves Maintenance Program (RRAMP); which is focussed on fire mitigation &amp; road safety; the Roadside Vegetation Management Program (RVMP) which is focussed on biodiversity protection; and the woody weed control works program undertaken in council managed reserves set aside for conservation.</p> <p>Read more here: Roadside Vegetation <a href="https://www.ahc.sa.gov.au/environment/roadside-vegetation">https://www.ahc.sa.gov.au/environment/roadside-vegetation</a></p> <p>We have initiated a cross-council reference group with neighbouring Councils looking at best practise management for verges and public lands.</p> <p><i>According to roadside maintenance plans developed interstate, supporting and promoting leave early messaging should be the key focus, as driving on any road during a bushfire is inherently dangerous.<sup>5</sup> AHC is committed to supporting the CFS to share this message in the lead up to and during fire danger season each year via our website, social media, community education workshops run in partnership with the CFS.</i></p> <p>Where significant regrowth of native vegetation occurs following a fire event, Council assesses the need for fuel hazard reduction on a site-by-site basis. To preserve local biodiversity, we will only undertake works where vegetation fuel thresholds exceed acceptable levels.</p> |
| <b>How Council can help</b>     | <p>When elevated fuel loads exist, and warrant council action, we will mechanically slash or chemically spray identified fuel loads. Our approach is to prioritise verges that present the greatest fuel load risk to infrastructure and assets.</p> <p>Council will consider waiving the fee of any S221 application based on the nature of proposed works, or if it is proposed to establish revegetation with native species.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <b>Further information</b>      | If you have specific questions around management of a verge adjacent your property, contact Council on 8408 0400.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |

|  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|--|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  | <p>There is not enough evidence to suggest that roadside vegetation, and native vegetation in general, is exclusively responsible for increasing or decreasing the landscape bushfire risk to life and assets; as fire behaviour is also determined by topography and weather. (Resilient Hills &amp; Coasts Bushfire and Biodiversity report Discussion and Recommendations p3)</p> <p><a href="https://engage.ahc.sa.gov.au/88841/widgets/417182/documents/271149">https://engage.ahc.sa.gov.au/88841/widgets/417182/documents/271149</a></p> |
|--|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

## 7 Strategic Priority 3: Utilising Latest Fire Science Approaches

There is a large and continuously growing body of research around fire science and ecology. In Australia, fire has always been part of the landscape and when it is understood and managed effectively, it provides benefits to both the natural environment and the people who live there.

We know that fire regimes have changed substantially since pre-European settlement, leading to adverse impacts on native species from both uncontrolled bushfires and prescribed burning. This includes the impacts of fire events occurring too infrequently, as many native plants rely on fire to germinate. When fire moves through an ecosystem it effectively clears a lot of undergrowth and allows more natural light in, which improves the nutrient balance of the soil and reduces competition amongst multiple plant species.<sup>9</sup>

Some of the other ecological benefits of fire include:

- Eliminating invasive weeds and creating improved conditions for native species to thrive.
- Regenerating seeds of native plants that have been dormant in the soil.
- Flushing out insects that may have caused damage to the soil and tree roots.

Standing burnt trees with hollows can also provide valuable habitat for native animal species such as birds and possums, while fallen burnt logs create safe havens for lizards and other small reptiles.

Research carried out in 2018 shows 90% of Adelaide Hills and Eyre Peninsula residents surveyed would like to see biodiversity considered in bushfire policy.<sup>10</sup>

This section of the strategy provides an overview of the latest fire science and ecology available, and how AHC plans to utilise this knowledge in our approach to fire mitigation work.

### 7.1 Vegetation management principles

There are a range of vegetation management techniques we can use in fire mitigation. When deciding which ones to apply, we need to consider not just how to reduce fuel loads; but also how to minimise negative impacts on our natural environment.

Different techniques can also be used for various land uses. For example, grazing stock in a mosaic pattern may be an effective mitigation strategy on agricultural land; whereas road verges are more likely to respond to slashing or spraying (depending on the types of vegetation present).

Our Council's fire mitigation operations are informed by the latest available fire science research and best practice. We source our information largely from the following places:

- Australian Institute Disaster Resilience <https://www.aidr.org.au/>
- Natural Hazards Research Australia <https://www.naturalhazards.com.au/>
- Geoscience Australia <https://www.ga.gov.au/education/classroom-resources/hazards/natural-hazards/bushfire>

### 7.2 Cultural burning, hazard reduction burning and ecological burns

There are a number of different types of burns that can be carried out to help manage our land. All of these are considered forms of 'prescribed burning.'

- Cultural burning is the intentional use of fire by First Nations Australians, conducted under low intensity conditions, and resulting in both ecological outcomes and enhanced connection to Country.
- Ecological burning is informed by the principles of cultural burning but is a Westernised practice that doesn't always involve traditional owners directly. Also carried out in cooler conditions and in targeted patches- often in a mosaic pattern- it aims to reduce the fuel loads available in the event of a larger, uncontrolled fire.
- Hazard reduction burning usually involves a larger burn area, and higher intensity conditions. It is controlled, but instead of being introduced at ground level it is used to reduce fuel loads in all layers of vegetation- including the canopy layer.

According to DEWNR's guidelines<sup>11</sup>, which in turn are informed by various research around fire ecology, mosaic burning is one of the most effective methods of achieving both fuel reduction and ecological outcomes. The guidelines also lay out clear flowcharts to assist in deciding whether to conduct prescribed burning based on several factors.



### 7.3 Responding to the impacts of climate change

It's important to note the impacts of climate change on the frequency and intensity of bushfires in Australia. According to a Natural Hazards Australia CRC report into the Black Summer Bushfires of 2019-20, ***'drought and heatwave conditions in the lead up to multiple fires during Black Summer were a key factor in fire behaviour. This demonstrates how vital effective preparation will be in future given shifts in our climate towards more frequent heatwaves and droughts.'***<sup>12</sup>

This is not the only piece of research that demonstrates the need for a more proactive planning approach to vegetation management. Multiple reports on the same Black Summer season show that climate change was instrumental in the size and intensity of these fires, suggesting that 'the magnitude and ferocity of the 2019/2020 fires would have been virtually impossible without climate change.'<sup>13</sup>

Lightning strike is the leading cause of bushfires in Australia<sup>14</sup> and this may have implications on future fire events too as electrical storms also become more frequent and intense. At any rate, we need to plan for future events knowing that both climate change impacts are continuing to increase, and fire is inevitable in our landscape.

We will be informed by the [Resilient Hills and Coasts Climate Change Adaptation Plan<sup>16</sup>](#), which suggests the following priority adaptation options for local government:

- **Greater investment into community education**, including 'welcome packs' for new residents. This is currently being explored both through various Redicommunities groups who have developed their own 'welcome pack' templates with council support, and through the inclusion of bushfire preparedness information with rates notices in the lead up to fire danger season.
- **Improved rates and timeframes for enforcement of Section 105F notices** AHC already has quite a short timeframe for residents to action their notices (21 days), recognising the priority that needs to be given to removing excess fuel hazards. In the leadup to the 2023-24 fire season, AHC has changed the way we enforce the Fire and Emergency Services Act 2005. Properties which have received a 105F notice in the last 5 years will now be issued with an expiation at first inspection. This is to encourage owners to act more quickly to clean up ahead of fire season.



#### 7.4 Mapping and data collection

Traditionally, local governments have relied on Bushfire Management Area Plans (BMAPs), produced by the SA CFS, to inform scheduling of fire mitigation works.

There are however limitations to these, and there is an opportunity through updated mapping and simulation techniques for Councils to undertake more detailed mapping of fuel loads, vegetation types and predicted fire behaviour. This is an area AHC is currently investigating.

This approach is in line with the work currently being undertaken in other states, as reflected in Recommendation 36 of a NSW Bushfire Inquiry carried out following the 2019-20 fire season:

**‘Recommendation #36: Long-term ecosystem and land management modelling, improved understanding of ecosystem health and impact of bushfire disturbances’.**<sup>15</sup>

Our future scheduling of fire mitigation work on public land will be based on mapping and relevant data sets, with the areas identified as higher risk being prioritized for treatment. Our fire track network review will also be influenced by this data.

Working with the AMLR cross-council bushfire action group (CCBAG), we will also ensure that our approach is consistent with that of other councils and that information can be shared across boundaries. The modelling we are undertaking uses [BARRA data from the Bureau of Meteorology](#) to obtain a more accurate picture of fire weather scenarios and the types of conditions we need to consider in our planning. Read more here: <http://www.bom.gov.au/research/projects/reanalysis/>



### 7.5 Managing native vegetation following fire

Following an uncontrolled bushfire, the recovery of native plants and animals is not only crucial to ensure the health of ecosystems, but to improve the wellbeing of impacted communities by demonstrating restoration of important local environments.

This was demonstrated clearly after the 2019 Cuddlee Creek fire, when AHC's Creative Recovery program encouraged residents to capture their thoughts and emotions through various media following the fire. One of the strongest themes that came through during this process was the sense of hope that came with the regeneration of impacted landscapes.

After a significant fire event, Landcare and Friends groups are often inundated with new volunteers wanting to help with weed control and revegetation efforts. This is an area Council would like to support further, to remove the extra workload from existing group members who may also be personally impacted.



## 7.6 Best practice examples

Many local government organisations interstate are already doing great work in this area which we can learn from. Two examples are provided here, with recommendations on how AHC can adopt key elements of each approach.

### **Bushfire Resilience Inc. (Victoria)**

Bushfire Resilience Inc. (BRI) was created by a group of community members from fire-affected areas in Victoria in 2020. It is an independent organisation and is sponsored by Bendigo Bank. The major focus of BRI to date has been the development of a series of webinars assisting residents to understand their bushfire risk and better prepare for fires. A number of experts from various fields have been invited to present during these webinars.

The content of the webinars is relevant to all Australians living in bushfire prone areas, so rather than attempt to recreate it, AHC will look to promote content such as BRI's webinars via social media and other channels in the lead up to fire season each year. We will also continue to review whether any new content has become available through other sources that we can actively promote.

More information is available at [www.bushfireresilience.org.au](http://www.bushfireresilience.org.au)

### **Hotspots (NSW)**

Delivered by the NSW Rural Fire Service (RFS) and the Nature Conservation Council (NCC) of NSW, the Hotspots Fire Project is a training program for both landholders and land managers in NSW. It states its mission as: ***Working with our partners to increase community understanding, confidence and capacity to sustainably manage fire for ecological and First Nations cultural outcomes, whilst protecting life and property.***

The training delivered through Hotspots is flexible and designed according to the needs of each participating community. The key outcomes are that participants will be trained to successfully conduct prescribed burning, as well as developing individual fire management plans for their properties. While AHC is not currently resourced to offer this scale of training to our community, it is a future opportunity that we may consider should appropriate funding streams become available.

More information is available at [www.hotspotsfireproject.org.au](http://www.hotspotsfireproject.org.au)

## 8 Strategic Priority 4: Continuous Improvement of Council's Operational Plans

It is important that we regularly assess the effectiveness of our operations; therefore the following review process will apply to the Bushfire Mitigation Landscape Strategy.

### 8.1 Review process

This strategy will undergo a **major review** every 4 years, in line with AHC's Strategic Plan. Strategy reviews will be undertaken by Fire Prevention Officers and their relevant managers.

As part of the major review, responsible staff will consider the following:

1. Is there any information, including links to other resources, within the strategy that have dated? Can they be updated, or do they need to be removed?
2. Can we refer to more current research and reviews than what appears here?
3. Are there any major operational changes or resourcing constraints that impact our ability to deliver all aspects of this strategy? If so, how can they be managed across relevant departments to continue to achieve the strategy objectives?
4. Where 'future opportunities' listed have been realised and are no longer relevant, can they be removed completely? Or do they create an opportunity for further work in this area?

The review process will take into account the updating of our Bushfire Mitigation Task List.

All major reviews of this strategy should be done with reference to the following guiding documents:

- State Bushfire Coordination Committee (SBCC) 2016, Adelaide and Mt Lofty Ranges Bushfire Management Area Plan June 2016 <https://sbcc.sa.gov.au/bushfire-management-committees/adelaide-and-mount-lofty-ranges/bushfire-management-area-plan/>
- NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment, Fire Management Manual 2022-23 <https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/-/media/OEH/Corporate-Site/Documents/Parks-reserves-and-protected-areas/Fire/fire-management-manual-2022-23-220248.pdf>
- State Bushfire Coordination Committee (SBCC) 2020, [Bushfire Management Zone Standard and Guidance for Use](https://sbcc.sa.gov.au/resources/) <https://sbcc.sa.gov.au/resources/>
- State Government of Victoria (VicRoads) 2013, Road Bushfire Risk Assessment Guidelines and Risk Mapping Methodology <https://www.vicroads.vic.gov.au/-/media/files/technical-documents-new/bushfire-risk-assessment-guidelines/road-bushfire-risk-assessment-guidelines-and-risk-mapping-methodology.ashx>

**The strategy will also be reviewed for general updates annually** following the fire danger season, and operational plans will be adjusted as needed.

When a significant fire event has occurred in the AHC area, key staff will also review the strategy to identify any areas that may need further consideration or prioritization.

## 9 Roadmap of future priorities

We've mapped some future priorities and are keen to hear your feedback on these as part of the consultation.

### 9.1 General opportunities

- The way we manage properties with absentee landholders needs to be continuously revisited with input from Council's Regulatory Services and Open Space teams.
- There is a lack of information for renters and landlords regarding property preparation, which could be addressed through the development of a new resource for this audience.
- There is also an opportunity to develop new resources and supports for those members of our community physically unable to carry out property preparation activities. This will require consultation with key staff from the Positive Ageing Team, as well as our Social Planning Officer.
- We could be working more closely with landholders concerned about extensive regrowth from colonizing species (such as *Acacia pycnantha*) post fire. This may involve sharing easily accessible information relating to their life cycles and how they can be managed; as well as specific advice for landholders when required.
- Dedicated funding and resources are required to investigate a co-design approach to implement First Nations landscape management methods, including cultural burning.
- It is recommended that AHC undertakes a review of our annual maintenance plans to ensure they do not encroach on areas identified for conservation according to Council's Biodiversity Strategy.

### 9.2 Opportunities: Strategic Priority 1

- We will work to establish more robust partnerships with other agencies including SA Water, National Parks and Wildlife Service, and the DEW Burning on Private Lands program (BoPL). This includes formalising resourcing arrangements to support DEW to deliver the BoPL, particularly regarding follow up weed control for 4-5 years following burning.
- AHC will continue its involvement in the cross-council bushfire action group over the coming years, actively identifying opportunities to build on and improve current practises at a wider scale.
- Through the Cross-Council Bushfire Action Group (CCBAG), we will advocate to the AMLR Bushfire Management Committee for more streamlined approaches to landscape scale issues such as fire track mapping and maintenance.

### 9.3 Opportunities: Strategic Priority 2

- AHC works closely with the CFS Region 1 and 2 Community Engagement Unit to identify key risk areas for targeted engagement each year. We will continue to support this partnership on an ongoing basis, and where possible contribute time and resources to enhance community education in these areas.
- We intend to work with our internal communications team to schedule regular reminders on private property preparation to be shared on our social media platforms. This information will include links to low flammability planting guides, as well as tips for verge management and targeted information for managing different land types (agricultural, hobby farms, orchards, bush blocks etc.)
- A detailed audit of our existing fire track network would be valuable in helping to determine the tracks of highest strategic value, map the classification of all tracks in the district, and identify opportunities to add or remove tracks as appropriate.
- We will continue to explore opportunities to inform residents of fire mitigation works happening near them, through the expanded use of technologies including MyLocal Services App and StoryMaps.
- Recognising the need for greater awareness raising of fire risk and preparation across our community, we are looking to produce a series of videos (to be shared on our website and social media) discussing property preparation tips for a variety of land types.

### 9.4 Opportunities: Strategic Priority 3

#### 9.4.1 Prescribed burning

- Prescribed burning is generally conducted by state government and CFS, rather than at a Council level; however it is recommended that AHC work to identify opportunities to collaborate on burning in the future in areas where Council and state government land meet.
- A future priority should be to develop fire management plans for Council- owned parks (such as Lobethal Bushland Park), reflecting both hazard reduction and ecological priorities. This may involve measures such as controlled burning on adjacent land (potentially through the Burning on Private Lands program), as well as creation of buffer zones through planting fire-resistant species around park perimeters.
- We do need to consider that ***'the resilience of some biodiversity assets can be improved with the use of ecological burns, at the right scale and timing, however this requires strong evidence that the species, or ecological community, will respond favourably to fire'*** ([Resilient Hills & Coasts Bushfire and Biodiversity report Discussion & Recommendations](#), p3). This means we will need to act on the best available information and work closely with Biodiversity staff in designing any ecological burning programs in the future.
- AHC would like to explore work in partnership with Kurna and Peramangk nations to identify ideal locations and schedules for conducting cultural burns where possible. This needs to be done through ongoing and respectful relationships between those involved, and will involve

formalized and well-resourced approaches to facilitating the work, which has been crucial to the success of such partnerships in other local government areas as summarized below:

*'It is critical to empower First Nations to contribute to current bushfire management and ensure that the decision or approach to undertake Indigenous fire management is solely that of the First Nations groups of the RH&C region'* (Resilient Hills & Coasts Bushfire and

Biodiversity Report Discussion & Recommendations, p3)

<https://engage.ahc.sa.gov.au/88841/widgets/417182/documents/271149>

#### 9.4.2 Responding to climate change

AHC will consider a range of options to allow us to better adapt to the likelihood of more frequent and intense fire conditions due to climate change. These include:

- Promoting small-scale burns in public lands adjacent to private property where feasible. This is in line with AFAC's recommendation that these types of burns can not only reduce bushfire threat, but also to maintain and revive biodiversity affected by changed fire regimes associated with European settlement over the past 240 years.<sup>7</sup> It also reflects the findings of a report into prescribed burning on Kangaroo Island, which found that risk mitigation burning was more effective in areas at the interface of vegetation and buildings, rather than in large areas of bush.<sup>8</sup>
- Reframing some burning programs as 'ecological' rather than hazard reduction burns, reflecting the benefit of following more natural fire regimes where possible.
- Working in close collaboration with the CFS to report on real-time curing of grasslands to inform declaration of fire danger seasons.
- Work with DEW to identify opportunities for partnering on mosaic or other prescribed burning programs, to meet landscape scale objectives.

#### 9.4.3 Using technology and best practise examples

- Mapping and simulation technologies are constantly evolving and offering more detailed insights into fire behaviour and management techniques. AHC Fire Prevention staff will continue to seek out the most appropriate technologies to assist with scheduling mitigation works.
- We would like to consider how to support and expedite the training and induction of new volunteers, supported through our Biodiversity program. This would aim to address the challenges that often arise following bushfire events, where an influx of new volunteers can place further onus on fire-affected community members attempting to carry out these works.
- We will actively promote resources from Bushfire Resilience Inc. in the lead up to fire season each year, as well as seeking and promoting other sources of information to assist residents with property preparation.
- Our resources will reflect, wherever relevant, the CFS position statement on large trees in relation to bushfire risk. It is hoped that this will help address misconceptions and assist residents to better manage large trees on their properties.
- It would be beneficial for AHC to explore funding opportunities for future programs similar to the NSW Hotspots approach (i.e. participants are trained to successfully conduct prescribed

burning, as well as developing individual fire management plans). Consideration would be given to how this might operate within the AHC area, which landholders or communities would be prioritized to receive the training based on risk level, and which other agencies could be approached to co-fund and co-deliver the program.



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## 11 Appendix: Evidence and engagement base

Development of the strategy has been informed by the following sources of information and best practice examples:

- Hotspots Fire Management program NSW
- Bushfire Resilience Inc. Victoria
- Case studies developed by the SA Resilient Hills & Coasts Bushfire and Biodiversity group
- Natural Hazards Research Australia (Bushfire & Natural Hazards CRC)
- NRM Regions Australia Bushfire Recovery Knowledge Hub
- NSW Nature Conservation Council
- Australian Institute of Disaster Resilience

We have engaged with the following groups and community organizations to ensure this strategy is realistic and achievable:

- SA Country Fire Service staff and volunteers
- Adelaide Hills community members (via online consultation group)
- Department for Environment and Water
- Forestry SA
- Hills & Fleurieu Landscape Board
- Fire ecologists and scientists from Uni SA and Adelaide University
- Adelaide Hills Community Action Bushfire Network (AHCABN)
- Cuddlee Creek and Cherry Gardens Recovery Groups
- Fire Management staff from neighbouring Councils within the AMLR region
- Nillumbik Shire Council, Victoria (which has similar landscape and demographics to AHC)
- Local Landcare groups and Friends of Parks